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ABSTRACT

A study explored the ways that front-line community development workers across Canada gained information needed to work with women participants in community economic development initiatives. Data were gathered through focus groups, a preliminary study with 15 key informants employed in community development organizations, and structured telephone interviews. One theme that emerged from the interview data was the existence of a large number of differing knowledge classes related to social situations, the legitimization of knowledge, and the practice of community development. Collisions among these different perspectives appear to create a "discord of knowing." The study also found that while gender affects an individual's experience and participation within a community setting, it cannot be considered in isolation from class, ethnicity, geography, disability, and other social factors. Drawing on anecdotal illustrations from the data, the study found that workers construct a knowledge set derived from a synthesis of formal and informal learning sources and apply the resulting perspective in development work. In the process, collisions occur and boundaries are challenged among and within academic, government, business, and practice orientations. The study concluded that agreement is emerging among practitioners about what is needed for successful development outcomes, but that their insights are not necessarily recognized as legitimate, especially by funding agencies. Changing such structural attitudes toward the value of informal local knowledge is vital for the success of development efforts. (Contains 31 references.) (KC)

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Perspectives from CED Practitioners Working with Women
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Mary Stratton and Ted Jackson

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KNOWLEDGE COLLISIONS: PERSPECTIVES FROM CED PRACTITIONERS WORKING WITH WOMEN (1)

Mary Stratton & Ted Jackson

CSTIER

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NALL

ABSTRACT

In 1998/9 the Centre for the Study of Training Investment and Economic Restructuring (CSTIER), in association with New Approaches to Livelong Learning (NALL), conducted a study that allowed front-line community economic development workers across Canada to explore the ways they gained information needed to work with women participants in community economic development initiatives. One theme that emerged from the qualitative interview data was the existence of a plethora of knowledge clashes related to social situations, the legitimisation of knowledge, and the practice of community development (economic or social). Collisions between these different perspectives appear to create a 'discord of knowing.'

The problems deriving from such tensions of knowledge are also identified and discussed in international, cross-disciplinary community development and community economic development literature. While gender affects an individual's experience and participation within a community setting, it cannot be considered in isolation from class, ethnicity, geography, dis/ability, and many other social factors. An academic recognition of this complexity is one thing; addressing the resulting tensions in practice is another - and not an easy matter to resolve.

Drawing on anecdotal illustrations from the study data, this paper explores the intersections of formal and informal learning as they occur in the social process of community social and economic development. It is argued that front-line development workers construct a particular knowledge set derived from a synthesis of formal and informal learning sources and apply the resulting perspective in an attempt to mediate the contested terrain of knowledge and development work. In the process, collisions occur and boundaries are challenged among and within academic, government, business, and practice orientations. Informal learning becomes not just a means to foster opposition, but a potential way to negotiate conflict and find resolution.

Presently, among practitioners, strong agreement is emerging concerning what is needed for successful development outcomes. Their insights, however, are not necessarily recognized as legitimate, most especially by those providing development funding. Changing such structural attitudes towards the value and importance of informal local knowledge is vital to moving forward.

INTRODUCTION

The concept of an interrelated world economy, generally termed "globalization," has become an inevitable component of academic, media, government and everyday discussions of the contemporary world. For developed countries such as Canada,
this process of globalization supposedly moves our economy from a resource-manufacturing base towards one primarily
concerned with knowledge production suitable to the new "information age." In this context, albeit with different interests and intents, academia, business, government, and lately, civil society, have increasingly focussed on how and what people learn. "Entrepreneurship" and "microenterprise" have become catch words of this new economy, and the ideology behind them often poses problems for those involved in community economic development (CED) and adult education who insist on a component of

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social transformation as well as economic advancement. In the words of one CED practitioner, "we want people to go out and be able to succeed in the mainstream economy, but we don't want to buy into a system that puts the economy ahead of the people that participate....We're here to give a shot to those who don't usually get one". [#3/17c]

Focussing on issues of learning, knowledge and practice, we explore some of the tensions, problems and possibilities that CED practitioners confront as a necessary part of their job. There are two prongs to our primary argument: first, that the tensions that arise among individuals and groups who hold different learning perspectives, lead to collisions that create barriers and boundaries which are detrimental to gaining and applying new learning and thus, inevitably to successful CED practice; and second, that out of this discord of knowing emerges a new synthesis of knowledge that enables CED workers to challenge resistant boundaries and intercede to mediate constructive solutions that allow both social and economic development.

In 1998 -1999, the Carleton university based Centre for the Study of Training Investment and Economic Restructuring (CSTIER), in association with the Network for New Approaches to Lifelong Learning (NALL),1 [2] conducted a study that encouraged front-line community economic development workers across Canada to explore the ways they gained information needed to work with women participants in community economic development (CED) initiatives. NALL was concerned with advancing understanding of the relations between formal, non-formal, and informal learning processes [3] as they relate to learning potential in the emerging global economy (NALL,2000a). From the NALL perspective, the CSTIER project fell under the mandate of research Group 5, which was to "investigate and compare approaches to informal learning in different types of workplaces, households and community settings." (NALL 2000b). For CSTIER, although it is a university-based research centre, the primary goals were more pragmatic than academic. The funding provided an opportunity to initiate much needed Canadian research related to CED practice and awareness of gender issues and to disseminate the findings among the Canadian CED community. Thus, even at the outset of the project, differences in knowledge orientations were an essential dynamic of the research relationship. The clashes that inevitably occur between academic ideals and theory, and the pragmatic necessities of frontline CED practice, are an active part of the development of our discussion, which has evolved as a result of the interactions between the CSTIER research team, the CED practitioners who took part in the study, and members of the NALL network.

BACKGROUND AND METHODOLOGY

CSTIER's core purpose is to provide a bridge between academia and frontline community economic development practice. In 1997, the centre launched the Community Economic Development and Technical Assistance Program (CEDTAP), a three million-dollar initiative that has matched nearly 100 community-based organizations with technical advice and support provided by a pool of more than 30 experienced groups of CED professionals (Jackson, 2000). In 1998, aware that there was a lack of Canadian resources about CED practice with women, CEDTAP was in the process of establishing the Gender and Learning Group, an electronic list dedicated to exchanges of information of use to CED practitioners. The NALL-CSTIER project, *Women and Community Economic Development: Changing Knowledge, Changing Practice*, [4] was complementary to this and other centre projects focussing on CED and gender. The three-member research team (who all combined academic associations and community development experience) generated a set of research questions that reflected the team's academic interest in learning processes together with a concern to gather information of practical application and usefulness to CED practitioners. [5] The main focus of the study was on how practitioners, engaged in CED that includes or is specific to women, gain new information relevant to their work, and incorporate that new learning into their daily practice. Interview questions focussed on sources of information, learning opportunities and processes, the relative usefulness of different kinds of knowledge, and methods and opportunities for applying new knowledge. The questions of 'if' and 'how' gender issues affected learning and practice were central to the inquiry. Identifying problems experienced by practitioners, along with their suggestions for improvements, was also an important element.

As both NALL and CSTIER are committed to applying research methods which include the participation of those who are the subject of the study, the methodology was designed to be as collaborative as possible. A draft interview schedule was presented to a focus group of Toronto based CED workers. From the outset, the boundaries of knowledge and learning in relation to CED and the

proposed study were questioned. The CSTIER research team did not directly employ the terms "formal," "non-formal"and"informal" learning in developing the research instrument. We did ask about formal education, generally recognized to refer to credentialized, course-based learning obtained in an accredited, state-recognized institution. The boundaries between non-formal and informal learning, however, seemed problematic, and blurred from a CED practice perspective. NALL considers non-formal learning to be that which does not qualify as "formal' but which is organized by an instructor/facilitator. It includes a vast array of possibilities such as all interest courses, Sunday school, amateur sports, workshops and conferences. As CED practitioners are often those responsible for organizing community "non-formal" events, we anticipated that they might not readily conceptualize this form of learning as distinctly separate from other learning activities. Consequently, we took a very broad and open approach to asking about learning. Our introduction to interviewees stated only that we wished to "find out how practitioners involved with women and CED gain new information relevant to their work, and how they incorporate that new learning into practice" (interview schedule[6] [7]

In the study's pilot phase, when the draft research instrument was given to a focus group, the members generated many more critical points and questions concerning how learning is considered, how it occurs, and whose knowledge counts. The following extracts from the focus group transcript illustrate the interactive process by which these questions were generated and addressed:

> E: [The project], is it learning about how gender influences CED, or how the learning that happens in CED is gendered?
> *E wonders if she made sense. R [the researcher] doesn't quite know what to say. The others are impressed with the question! R says she thinks it is hard to really separate the two things. She suggests the goal was to find out how CED practitioners learn, but agrees that all the issues the group has raised are involved in this, which makes it very complex and difficult to get at. She suggests this project is exploratory, just a beginning.*
> C: From one hour to the next...there are different experiences, moving from one place to the next...[*murmurs of agreement from several participants concerning these changes in working context*]...it's hard trying to explain [what it is like to do that] and how I fit into those different roles. If I have to think of it as a gender based identity - it would take years [to explain] [*laughter. Pause*]
> A; ...it's not what you'd call a routine job... [*laughter*]
> E: The understatement for the afternoon!
> C: Just look at the way we've come to these questions. They're kind of linear [*laughs*] even though open-ended and we've done what we do - well, you know what, we get the essence of what you want to know, but let's talk about it in a language that's familiar to us and in a format that's familiar -
> [Someone] One that's bouncing all over the place?
> C: - Well, and it's story telling.

The input from the focus group strongly influenced the thinking and expectations of the CSTIER research team and ultimately, the research instrument.

The final interview schedule, designed to collect closed-end quantitative and in-depth qualitative information, was applied in a preliminary study with 15 key informants currently employed by CED organizations across Canada. Telephone interviews (approximately one hour in length) were conducted with practitioners from a variety of different geographical, economic and social contexts, who are concerned with promoting CED activities that include women as participants and beneficiaries. The qualitative components of the interview transcripts were analysed by developing a thematic grid to identify common concerns and viewpoints. A summary of the study results was developed and distributed to the research participants, other members of the CED community, and the NALL network members. Results from the study were also presented and discussed in a roundtable session at the 1999 conference of the Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women (CRIAW). The summary of that session subsequently became part of the overall data set.

One of the major issues emerging from the study data was the existence of knowledge clashes. Collisions concerning what counted as legitimate knowledge and how this was learned were pivotal discussion points that challenged neat academic divisions between formal, non-formal, and informal learning. Imbedded in the participants' responses were tensions that went far beyond the initial focus on gender. Clashes between theory and practice, at many different levels and locations emerged, and

tensions deriving from the interaction of gender and social class were pronounced. The present paper has developed as a result of these insights from the research participants, and takes their anecdotal explanations as the primary platform for further exploring the collisions, barriers and possibilities to which they collectively point.

THE RESISTANT BOUNDARIES OF DISCORDANT KNOWLEDGE

Theory and Practice: The Academic Versus Front-line Divide

It is increasingly well recognized and documented that the structural conditions of the academy and those of actual practice are markedly different and have different cultural rules as well as practical necessities. Both front-line teachers and community development workers view academics as generally out of touch with the pressures and necessities of everyday practice (Hansen et al, 2001; Heaney, 1993; Lewis, 1999). Heaney (1993) goes as far as to argue that conducting research and developing knowledge that is truly participatory is counter to the very existence of universities which are founded on the premise of a knowledge elite. Ultimately, the university institution must attempt to co-opt and re-own knowledge created in this way. There are, nevertheless, many scholars with a genuine philosophical commitment to the use of participatory research approaches and partnerships to challenge dominant knowledge assumptions and effect social change (CSTIER and NALL being examples of this). Church (2000) refers to the members of such community-academic partnerships as "bridge people" (p.4).

Heaney's concerns cannot, however, be lightly dismissed. First, although there are a few attempts in the United States and Canada to develop university programs specific to CED practice, there are significant structural barriers to initiating programs that truly include community-based knowledge (Lovett, 1997; Lewis, 1999). University courses inevitably tend to emphasize the theoretical, whereas effective practitioners need to acquire a combination of community development, business and political management skills. It would seem clear that those with actual practice experience should be involved in the design and delivery of CED courses, but few have the Ph.D. credential demanded by the university (Lewis, 1999). Most formal educators, however, lack the skills required to design and/or deliver community education (Lovett, 1997). The CSTIER research participants heavily underlined this gulf between academic teaching and what CED workers need to learn and how they want to learn it:

> The least useful [knowledge] is from academic conferences and publications, because the written "publish-or-perish" syndrome often requires a language which is impenetrable. At academic conferences, presenters are often out of touch with the real people that they are supposed to be talking about. [#12/15a]
>
> [It's about] the way the women want [the learning]. [About] finding out how they learn and then giving the information to them in that way. It's letting them tell me how they learn and responding to that. I call it sharing information - not teaching.... Noting the difference in the way women learn compared to men, and paying attention to hands-on application is very important. Using useful resources and applying them in our practice. But this is not how you get taught at a technical school, where the guys are. [#16/15]
>
> I feel my big stumbling block having just come from graduate school, is not lack of ideas, but the ability to implement them. Can I learn from others about resources that would allow me to implement ideas? Hopefully, [there will be] a CED conference...about how we make things happen. [#5/22]

As the above remarks suggest, the divide between the academy and CED practice perspectives also pertains to written material on CED practice. There is little time and money available for CED workers to write about their own practice experience and few avenues to have such material published and widely circulated. The majority of literature concerning CED that is readily identifiable and attainable is published by academic sources in a style most suited to readers with university level education. This is far from ideal. As one participant explained, "I'm biased against academic literature. I need something to work with that's my way of learning. I prefer case studies - just theory [alone] is difficult to apply" [#15/8].

Although style and language are noted as a barrier to the usefulness of academic literature,[(8)] most emphasized is the collision between ungrounded academic theory and the learning content CED

practitioners require. Academic publications have traditionally followed a formula of thesis generation prompted by analysis of previously published literature on the matter. Even when the topic to be researched is issue-based, generation of research questions and methods is usually derived from existing published work rather than in consultation with the people about to be 'researched.' We are convinced that a traditional academic approach to the issues discussed in this paper would have failed to generate the discussion that has become its focus. Most of the published literature cited within this discussion was only located *after* the participants had identified the problem of knowledge clashes and after an extensive cross-disciplinary search. A preliminary literature search focussing on women, CED and practice, conducted prior to discussions with CED workers, was found to be of limited utility and mainly demonstrated that specific attention to gender issues in CED practice in Canada was minimal. Such sources as were available did not really address the question of how CED practitioners gained and applied new learning relevant to their work.(9) The point here is twofold: traditional academic approaches to research and publication can actually create barriers to incorporating insights relevant to applied practice; and, if identifying relevant material can be challenging for academics, front-line practitioners certainly do not have the time to negotiate the boundaries of different disciplines, theoretical orientations and competing sets of often impenetrable jargon.(10)

The multi-faceted divide between academic knowledge and front-line practice creates a resistant problem for the CED practitioners. Knowledge generated and endorsed by academics is generally accepted as "legitimate" whereas other forms of knowledge, not recognized and endorsed in formal learning institutions, are not. Without legitimization of their knowledge perspective, CED workers face constant barriers to further professional training and to applying their knowledge in everyday practice. Asked what would help in the latter regard, one study participant was very clear about the matter:

> [What is needed is] for others to recognize that professional development and training of CED practitioners is essential (as academic training is for academics, etc.). We need an integrated knowledge program. Leaders in the field understand that and the importance of having opportunities and networks to [allow] discussion and exchange of ideas....Funders must recognize it is not just vacation time. CED training for practitioners about the complex world is needed - not just for the participants....Recognition at the Federal government level that it is ongoing, continuous learning - not a matter of educational credentials. And, academic learning may interfere with community-based learning and put me out of touch. For example, an MBA is perceived as valuable but community-based learning is not. [#4/20-21]

Theory and Practice: The Economic Versus Social Development Clash

Academic theory about the social side of community development is only one component of information tapped by CED practitioners. Another vital aspect is business-related (technical) knowledge, which might be gained from academic institutions, but more often via the business and economic sector. As one study participant explained, "what knowledge means to the practitioner is practical tools to do our job" [#06/22], and traditional business is no better at providing this than the academy. Another participant outlined the problem and the CED workers' creative, multi-task approach to resolving it:

> There is nothing out there in traditional business development programs to address these [gender-related] things....Women are more about creating...links and services - but these are not appreciated. There are two streams within the project team. The business trainer draws from traditional sources and her challenge is to...[be] really creative to adapt to the scale of business we work with (more informal, lower than the traditional small businesses edge). She has to adapt it so as to take into account women's ways of learning (group and participatory oriented). She gets a lot from within herself and the women she works with. CED initiatives are easier...because they take many of the issues into account....[but] they still focus on economic indicators - the money they make - whereas we focus on a sense of autonomy, confidence, and getting out of isolation. We feel we are out in the forefront with the other women's CED groups, having to invent ourselves. [#8/15a-b]

The preceding quote outlines both the multi-faceted nature of CED practice, and the inevitable tensions imbedded therein. The goal of CED is to bridge the divide between the business model approach to economic development and the social justice view, which holds that that the social development of a community is paramount and incompatible with market interests. Thus, by its nature, CED is rife with diverse, sometimes opposing views that give rise to the contradictions and tensions that are part of the everyday life of CED workers. While this leads to the development of integrated learning, it is not surprising that it also at times generates discordant knowledge.

A further tension arises between economic and social interests because CED organizations (CEDOs) in Canada rely heavily on state funding. While many programs funded in this way have achieved CED goals, there are also undeniably powerful interests within government at all levels that prefer more traditional economic development. These tend to work to marginalize CED policies and programs (Jackson, 2000, p.6). Thus, the structural context of CED practice is a contradictory one, and the response has been a permanent debate about how to best respond and interact within such conditions. (11)

Those working in the CED sector really have no option other than to live with, constantly think about, and attempt to understand the dilemmas provoked by structural tensions. As the CSTIER study showed, most attempt to find solutions that further CED ideals. Publications and other public opportunities for debate generally require the presenter to take a clear position, and for this reason it is possible that these media tend to over-emphasize the divisiveness of the debate.(12) Nevertheless, opposing perspectives are also sometimes present in front-line practice (Lennie, 1999; Lewis, 1999; Rubin, 1997). For example, a strong critique of the microenterprise model of CED emerged at the CRIAW roundtable, where most participants were engaged in social advocacy rather than economic development. They argued that people (especially women) needed food and shelter before they could even begin to think about training to start a small business. They also questioned the economic reality of microenterprises succeeding against large, dominant corporations.(13)As Rubin (1997) notes, if such clashes of perspective lead social activists and theorists to actually oppose some development projects, it can be extremely detrimental to overall community development. Using the example of affordable housing development, he argues that social justice ideals and concerns about the economic bottom line must, and can, be reconciled without de-mobilizing social advocacy.

Although they recognise the dangers inherent in attempting to negotiate the competing interests of state and corporate partnerships, many CED practitioners concur with Rubin that possibilities for successful outcomes can be found (Chambers, 1997; Church et al, 2000; Jackson, 2000; Torjman, 1999). A CSTIER study participant described the complexity and constraints practitioners face:

> [We need] more sources of knowledge [something]....that mixes traditional business knowledge with CED philosophies. Something to bridge and interpret the traditional into CED....A fundamental philosophical dilemma for CED (and it's more complex for women), is are we just interpreting the mainstream or do we realize that this doesn't apply, and go back and develop new approaches, which [then] become very marginalized? [We need] learning where you question the system that is giving you learning knowledge; [where] you have to learn on your own and with those you interact with everyday, who are sharing their problems with you. [#8/20]

The foregoing remarks also point to the danger of co-optation of egalitarian philosophies and methods at the economic level of CED initiatives as well as at the academic (noted earlier). As Lennie (1999) illustrates, "empowerment ideology" is a key concept in development theory, but in practice supposed "participatory" methods of community consultation can become corrupted by incorporation into models which remain essentially patriarchal and hierarchical. There is a danger that development workers (and academic theorists), who consider themselves committed to egalitarian processes, may overlook the deep structure of such power dynamics (Lennie, 1999; Rao, Stuart and Kelleher, 1999). A failure to fully recognize such dynamics may leave a practitioner convinced that an open consultation has been provided, when in fact what has occurred has been "mainly a one-way process of obtaining information from the community" that has left the community members frustrated and cynical (Lennie, 1999, p.104).

No matter how aware the CED worker is of co-optation dangers, s/he faces a daunting task. Alternatives to public funding are equally fraught with problems. Regardless of how financing is obtained, there is considerable agreement that embracing micro enterprise approaches, and/or business

models of evaluation can lead to "reproducing and reinforcing neoliberal globalization" (Jackson, 2000 p.4). Fontan & Shragge (2000) warn that the government will support micro enterprise projects only "as long as the objectives remain social integration and not social change, the costs are low, and it does not become a point of confrontation" (p.6). A CSTIER study participant complained, "we're strangled these days. You can't say the words "advocacy" or "lobby" now or we won't get any funding from the government or foundations" [#04/15a]. However, Church et al (2000) argue that despite the difficulties of developing funding proposals to meet government requirements, "in Ontario, community organizations have learned to replace the forbidden term 'advocacy' with still acceptable references to 'public education'"(p.5). Unquestionably, CED practice "is steeped in the challenge of integrating social goals with economic goals" (Lewis, 1999 p.181), and achieving this without abandoning core values is something the CSTIER research participants reported struggling with:

> Sometimes it is attractive to an organization to go where there is money. We've done it and found ourselves contracted out with no control of the elements of it, which [may] compromise our program. The organization has learned from this to be selective. [#07/17a]
>
> I think government has put [partnerships] in there as a bottom line thing...but from a CED view, I think it's a good learning tool. ..[We've] learned new skills by sharing the specific skills we already had. [#04/22]
>
> Some projects we don't do because there is no money for child care. We hope we can always get the money (somehow), so we don't have to *not* do it. We don't apply for funding that won't cover child care....This is our general principal for all programs, [that there be] support...either directly or through our liaisons. [#04/15b]
>
> There are problems. At least five social assistance policies need to be changed in order to allow women on [social assistance] to participate in our] program. We are working on this [to get the rules changed] [#05/16]

These statements from practitioners reflect high awareness of the tensions and contradictions that arise from a clash between economic and social development interests. Yet, they remain willing to tussle with the resulting discord in order to find effective ways to deliver the kind of CED they know their communities need.

The Power Dynamics of Community: "It's not just about gender"(14)

Chambers (1997) points to simplistic, dichotomous thinking (such as male/female, wealth/poverty, social/economic, academic/community, powerful/powerless), as a great impediment to successful development projects. He argues that the power dynamics of communities are far more complex. Taking a global perspective, it is perhaps possible to argue for an over- and under-class (if one allows a large mobile middle), but in front line local practice it is far more complex - there is no simple homogeneous grouping of 'types' of people. Within every social group, Chambers argues, there are "uppers' and "lowers," that is, some people have relatively more or less power than other members. The capital (or lack of it) attached to being an upper or lower in any given social situation is cumulative - having power in one setting tends to allow opportunities in other areas, and vice versa. The reality of deep poverty becomes multi-faceted deprivation, although even among the most deprived groups there will be, in relative terms, some uppers. These complex power dynamics, which are always present and constantly re-constructing themselves, must be recognized and continually challenged by CED practitioners. This, of course, is not easy. Using Chambers' framework, in relation to the community members they seek to assist, all CED workers are inevitably uppers. Moreover, as power tends to blind and distance the holder to the realities of others, it becomes a learning disability and a communication barrier.

Chambers offers an effective way of looking at the intersections of gender with social class, ethnicity, geography, physical ability, sexual orientation, and other social status markers. CED practice with women requires an awareness that we all hold gendered world views that affect the content and experience of knowledge, learning opportunities, and everyday life, but considering gender alone is not enough (ID21, 2000a; Lennie, 1999; Naples, 1997). Academic literature, and many front-line practitioners, have long identified a set of barriers specific to the successful CED participation of

women. Lennie (1999) argues that these barriers stem from male-defined approaches to planning and consultation that contrive, in a variety of ways, to disallow space for women's concerns. This combination of barriers serves to silence women and reduce their visibility (possibly making them completely invisible) in the development process (pp.98-99). Comments from the practitioners in the CSTIER study highlight some of the ways this can occur:

> Women's issues differ from those of men, for example providing day care, transportation, work situations, clothing. So many government initiatives do not consider these kind of things. [Sometimes] they might pick up on day care and transportation, but no flexible schedule to allow for the realities of being a mother, such as a sick child and no extended family to help out. [#10/17b]

> A: Once they [women] begin to engage in CED then their priorities begin to shift. I've found this engenders a lot of family difficulties....Men are running the show while women struggle to juggle family, work, health priorities.
> B: our knowledge as CED practitioners is very different to that of the women who come to the centre programs. [?]: Right! That's like a real life perspective. [#01]

> [Women] learn in a classroom setting that the way they conceive a problem is not right...Formal settings present knowledge in a way I can't understand...things are removed from the way I normally learn and understand. [01C]

> When men are involved in funding decisions we sometimes feel that we have a harder sell. If the man has no feminist conscience and thinks women should be at home with the kids (and we have encountered that), then it is a very hard sell. [#16/17b]

In addition to recognizing structural barriers to CED participation for women, female CED workers are sometimes aware of how their own work interactions are constructed in a gendered fashion, although their experience of this may differ:

> I struggle with being female and doing the work I do. I suspect it's the same thing for other people, but I don't know if it is....The chief [here] is male, which strikes a particular dynamic, and learning how to [manage] that is a huge part of what I do. [#01/B]

> I have worked in a segregated environment (all male dominated, or predominately women). I was asked once how I would handle working in a predominantly female environment, given the conflicts that were bound to arise. Why would they ask that? Assume conflicts are greater among women? It's not like that.[#7/18]

> There is too much of our role as a team of four women, of our experiences as women and mothers, to ignore in any of the work that we do (if we were four men it would look completely different).....When I do go out and see CED organizations that don't have a focus on women and try to apply a male-defined business model, something is missing. It [the male model] only works for women who have education and resources to deal with that, who could do it anyway because they have the culture and language (the talk, the dress, the aspirations, the approach). For me this is <u>not</u> CED [#8/18]

Within the last of the above quotes can be seen the complexity of gender interacting with other social statuses, as well as reference to the economic/social development divide discussed earlier.

The friction related to social class issues was often highlighted. As one practitioner put it, "it's not just women for me - it's low income women - the mixture of class as well as gender" [05]. The tone of the comments from CED workers seems to suggest that class divisions are deeper, and harder to overcome, than barriers that relate solely to being a women. Furthermore (in keeping with Chambers, 1997), they permeate every level of the CED process (funding, practice, program participation) and reveal mixed perspectives among the practitioners themselves:

> A funder walked in [to the centre] in a mink coat [and was] afraid to get it dirty. She's funding women on welfare! That sucks. It's totally inappropriate. There are class and

economic conflicts between people investing in the program and the participants. [#16/17c]

> The women's centre.... would be a good partner [but]...accepts the micro-economy uncritically. We are serving a different group…so, the question is whether they would see us as a partner. The class issue is within everything. In this case within the gender issue. [#03/20]

> There is real sympathy for low income women, and single parents in particular. The problem is [that there is also] a recognition that it is so much harder for those women to succeed in business, and of the limits of the support we can offer. We end up thinking, "can this woman pull this off? I don't think so." [#5/17b]

> In my case I'm dealing with a group of women, so the gender thing is built in….And I've struggled with a lot of these issues in my own life - the violence, the abuse, the whole thing, the homelessness, the poverty.... but the class thing - as a middle-class person I couldn't tell my family that I was on the street...I don't have to pretend [with the women in the program] that I haven't had those experiences]. [01/A]

> Some of the [participant] group…can get frustrated with some of it [problems the other women have]. [They]…have a high level of [formal] education, though they are now low-income. They don't have the understanding of [some of] the issues. [#16/19]

The above comments of the present study's participants illustrate that the CED practitioners themselves hold (or have held) different class locations. Front-line workers are more likely to be aware of the program participants' knowledge perspectives than are the organizational board members or funding representatives. But, even when practitioners do their utmost to convey program users' views to controlling organizations, that experience is still inevitably mediated. Cawley (1996) suggests that the more CED workers speak the language of the community, the greater will be their marginalization by those who hold powerful positions and conservative views that are legitimated by professional credentials. Such complexity of power relations and knowledge perspectives raises many questions about how community needs and solutions are defined. Who is involved and who excluded (Naples, 1997)? Saleeby (1998) argues that the dominant knowledge position tends to be problem focused and pushes practitioners in that direction also. The result is negative labelling of the community as dysfunctional, whereas a recognition and tapping of a distressed community's resources and strengths is necessary to successful development. Comments from a group of women raising children on social benefits deeply underscore this point. One woman took aim at school breakfast programs (usually run by middle-class women), asking why the mothers were not given the food so that they could directly feed their children. She wondered about the language of government advertising that claims "children can't learn if they are hungry." Would it be all right if they could do so? As long as children eat is it OK for their mothers to starve? Another women pointed out that it was the chicken she needed, not lessons on how to cook it (Landsberg, 1997). These women had been excluded from designing the programs they really needed - and the reason was not their gender, but their social class.

Class and gender also interact with other social factors adding to the complexity of the community power relations facing CED workers. In terms of the present study, although the focus group noted race and ethnicity as important factors, the rest of the research participants had little to say on the matter. While two-thirds reported their projects as considering ethnicity issues quite or very well, half also reported that there was very little representation from diverse groups of women. Some noted that this was an area they were working on, while others claimed there were organizations/programs specifically aimed at minority women, and thus it wasn't really their mandate. Barriers and tensions relating to ethnic diversity were an issue almost never volunteered by the participants. We are inclined to conclude that this indicates an area where many Canadian practitioners may tend to lack the necessary knowledge to analyse and address this cluster of issues.

Geography, particularly the difference between rural and urban situations, is another factor that has considerable impact on how the complexities and dynamics of gender, class and race play out in everyday life. Obviously geographic factors influence what work is available and thus what training and development is appropriate. Lovett (1997), however, suggests that although rural issues are understood in theory, there is a tendency in practice to bypass this knowledge. Decisions are often made, and programs initiated and implemented, at a regional (or even provincial) level, which are not actually

appropriate to the needs of individual rural communities. The rurally located practitioners in the CSTIER study were engaged in local programming, and thus did not raise this particular issue. They did raise the problem of distance, though, which has a variety of affects on their practice. Lack of opportunity to attend CED conferences or training events was noted, and while the growth of electronic communications had alleviated this somewhat, it did not make up for a lack of face-to-face interaction with other practitioners. Furthermore, telecommunication systems in some remote areas are still unreliable. In one case, a practitioner reported almost losing, and having to fight to retain, her Internet and fax connections, when her organization's board members thought these were an unnecessary cost. As will be discussed presently, informal learning opportunities are important to all CED workers, but to rural-based practitioners they are often all that is available.

The picture of community that emerges, therefore, is one in which a complexity of knowledge perspectives and power dynamics create a shifting terrain which both the CED worker and program participant must constantly negotiate. These shifts constitute the everyday reality of CED practice - knowledge clashes will arise, and as we will argue, can be a positive influence for constructive change. But when the boundaries of present knowledge, especially the privileged knowledge of uppers, is resistant to new learning and responsive change, "knots" of discord result which severely hamper successful CED practice.

Knots of Discord: Not Recognized, Not Funded, Not Sustainable

Lewis (1999) comments that there seems to be "a stubborn reluctance and/or inability to learn from what is working in community economic development.... [and] part of the problem appears to be the extreme reluctance of politicians and bureaucrats to adopt the longer-term investment perspective required" (p.212). This kind of climate results from the failure to confront and unravel the resistant knots of discordant knowledge we have previously discussed. As the following quote illustrates, such a climate generates frustration and anger among CED workers as well as marginalized community members:

> Why doesn't the government fund CED initiatives? I don't understand that! Given the fact that it is proven [successful] in countries all over the world, women's CED initiatives can be, and are, successful in financial terms and in building a safe community, why is the government reluctant to give long-term funding to get these projects off the ground?[I would like to see a] recognition of realities. It takes three years to get a small business established, but it is only supported for 12 months. This guarantees failure - why? In order to guarantee there will always be a scapegoat for the government to blame. [#10/19-20]

Recent literature concurs. Naples (1997) complains that although long-term, equitable, and choice-driven strategies have been identified, women's economic needs continue to be ignored because this alternative perspective is viewed as more risky than a conventional economic approach. Indeed, the importance attached to training poor women is apparently currently decreasing, despite a growing body of international research demonstrating such training is a key component of successful development. Some agencies and programs have abandoned training entirely in favour of micro credit schemes (ID21, 2000b). Church et al (2000) argue that this entrepreneurial culture has impact on the way community organizations define themselves and, in turn, leads to unstable and insufficient funding. Lovett (1997) contends that this type of funding climate leads community groups to compromise goals and standards in order to secure finances.

Obtaining suitable and sufficient funding was a major concern for all of the participants in the present study. Their programs generally relied on a mosaic of funding, to which the various levels of government were the primary contributors, followed by businesses and foundations. Practitioners frequently noted the gulf between available funding criteria and what they knew to be needed in order to effect sustainable community development. Statements made by the participants are the best way to illustrate these problems and how they relate to learning/knowledge and practice:

> Lack of time and funds can be a vicious circle preventing the application of new learning from taking the priority it should. It's less tangible and easy to dismiss in the face of more pressing deadlines and priorities. [#7/16]

> We want to build a show home in the city featuring accessible options.... But everyone says "why build in the inner city where it's run down?" But that's where many of our women live.

[Other people] say it's not worth as much if we build it in the inner city, but we want it in an area that is home to the women [#16/17c].

If people are not eligible (are not on Social Assistance, EI, whatever) the regulations can be very frustrating for them. There are those that don't fit these categories, that are interested [in our programs]...It should be for all who want/need it, so people don't have to fit the system - it should be the other way around. [#09/20]

They (the borrowers) have done their training before they get here. And then afterwards they are assigned to mentors. It makes no difference if they are men or women, the criteria for loans are the same.... It's hard to get anything done, to get committees to make necessary changes...I want change, there are identified areas, but I can't implement it [#5/15b-17a].

So many things just come down to funding....[which is] one of the hardest things to get. Everyone expects you to do things for nothing, but you just can't. A business pays a CEO really well, but if you look at what CED CEO's are paid it is ridiculous. CED organizations need to see themselves and their staff as professionals and treat them as such. Government is one of the biggest culprits. It gives money to organizations with only a small amount [allowed] for salaries. [Government] will fund job subsidies or overhead... [but staff] are undervalued and underpaid. [#2/21]

Unless it is a part something we are already working on (and so already funded), then we can't justify the cost [of applying new knowledge]. If the new learning occurred ahead of a proposal, then we would cost it in to that (e.g., a new manual). Otherwise we'd have to make it part of the next proposal, or network to provide it. There is never any extra [money] on hand. It means that proposal writing is a long and careful process. [#10/11]

If I had a cushy government or business job, I could get city hall to listen to me and pay attention. But I'm talking about an ideal world, because they....don't allow that my knowledge is legitimate - they shut you right down. [#10/21]

Some Board members (about half) have yet to meet even one of our borrowers. When it comes down to operations, the expectations of what is in a business plan and the payment schedules are not in keeping with the abilities of our clients. Board members don't have a clue [about] who we work with - [about] the real dynamics. [#05/17c]

Clients are not well represented on the Board....program participants originally had more of a voice but now the organization has defined itself more as a CED provider to constituencies of client groups living in long term poverty. [01B]

For the CSTIER study respondents, all forms of professional development for the CED practitioners--including formal education courses, conferences, or informal networking opportunities--fell into the category of things funding agencies did not view as important. Nearly 70% of the practitioners interviewed had personally contributed to the cost of their own learning opportunities, and 30% had covered all costs themselves. Twelve percent had also personally borne the costs of integrating new learning into practice.

In summary, resistant knots of discordant knowledge lead to a social-economic climate that is contrary to that identified as necessary to effective and sustainable CED. As one practitioner commented, "I have the impression that university..business life, and everyday [CED] client's life, are very different worlds" [#11/22]. The factors that contribute to a divide between the differing knowledges of theory and practice intertwine with the complex power dynamics present in any community to prevent constructive change. As long as those in control of what is currently regarded as legitimate knowledge refuse to open their minds and institutional doors to those who have learned something different, the experience and insights of most community members and workers will not be recognized. Until they are recognized, CED programs will not be sufficiently and appropriately funded; and if they are not properly funded, they will ultimately not be sustainable.

CONSENSUS AMONG DISCORD: POSSIBILITIES FROM COLLISIONS

So far, what we have presented is a litany of difficult problems that paint a rather pessimistic view of the conditions of doing CED. To contemplate, as we have suggested, "confronting and challenging" them all, may well seem daunting, to the point of being immobilizing. Nonetheless, CED workers do confront these issues every day, and what we will now argue is that out of the discord of knowing different things, a consensus is emerging among practitioners concerning both the problems and the possibilities for solutions. As already indicated, CED practitioners of necessity need to obtain and apply different kinds of knowledge to their work. The participants in the CSTIER study described how they achieved this, and what they revealed was a process of integrating knowledge that relied heavily on informal learning components. The result, we contend, is a particular, synthesized knowledge set that blurs socially constructed boundaries between discrete categories of learning. This synthesized knowledge also generates an ability to intercede among opposing groups and opinions to identify and mediate new possibilities for sustainable community development. In order to outline this in more detail, we first explore the role informal learning plays, and then illustrate the process of knowledge integration that practitioners described.

Challenging Boundaries: The Social Process of Informal Learning

Livingstone and Sawchuk (2000) have argued that subordinated groups widely employ creative (primarily informal) learning strategies as a means to produce an alternative body of knowledge which is more relevant than dominant forms to their lived cultural experience. Such learning is an expansive social phenomenon that is inherently oppositional because it is counter to the dominant knowledge perspective. Lovett (1997) suggests community education that occurs with the community is most effective and generally informal in approach. Further, Lewis (1999) argues that CED practitioner knowledge is derived from "learning from the trenches" (p.191), i.e., "they know because they have contributed their blood, sweat and tears....They know the hope that has been created in the lives of disadvantaged people, neighbourhoods and communities." (p.193). The participants in the CSTIER study strongly endorsed this concept of learning by doing, as can be seen by the following quotes. They also described the social process of such learning, with heavy emphasis on shared experience and personal reflection. This process was viewed as having a vital role in determining both program content and practice approaches:

> Learning by doing is the only way at this point that we learn, going...[in] and doing stuff, finding out what people want or need....In the [program] learning amongst the community members always happened there because someone else was doing something and someone else said, 'hey, that's cool, how do you do that?'...or they would find something in a book and say, 'how do we do that... we can figure that out'...it was a matter of a collective learning and doing. [#01D]

> It is impossible to really work with women without going back to their stories and experiences and opening up your book of skills and seeing what matches there [#08/22]

> My learning I think of as being forced by development - personal and professional development....learning is an on-going process through practice that never ceases to amaze me. [#01C]

> The knowledge and experience I gained personally [by] being a sole-support mother, with a handicapped child, on social assistance. This was, and is, most helpful in my dealings with low-income women, because I understand what they are experiencing. It is the sapping of energy [because of poverty] that prevents/immobilizes women from participation. [#10/18]

Respondents did not, however, value all kinds of informal learning equally. The above comments underline the importance of social interactions; of listening and relating to the experience of program participants and then translating the resulting information into program practice that met those self-identified needs. In contrast to this highly valued form of informal learning, practitioners also tended to rely heavily on informal learning from text-based sources (including the Internet) because these were the only opportunities open to them. While such sources had value, they were seldom viewed as ideal, as one participant commented:

> [Most of my learning is] self-directed, via the Internet, from the office and from home, [plus an] occasional conference…[and a] community college certificate program….No, these are not the best places. There is a lot of importance in networking with other practitioners, and there has been very little of this in the province to date. Learning with peers and colleagues would be the best conditions. [#14/12-13]

Learning from text-based information, whether gained formally or informally, generally had to be analysed and adapted before it was of any use to local CED practice. Opportunities to interact with other practitioners and program participants made this task much easier and helped prevent practice errors. Learning via social interactions was therefore key and, in stark contrast to the presumed process of formal classroom-based learning, it was also multi-directional and transferable, as one practitioner explained throughout her interview:

> [I learn] on the job. For example, while driving the truck, personal interactions with the workers take place. I get personal information about how [the women] want to learn. We put emphasis on this - the participants telling us how they want to learn….I've made it a point not to forget the struggle of learning for me….and I'm more patient with the women and encourage them to be more patient with themselves to expect to need more than one attempt. Mistakes are OK, we learn from them….One thing we do is attempt to relate learning to skills we already have - skills transference - for example if you can thread a needle you can fit a drill bit. We encourage [the women] to get over the idea they have "done nothing, just raising children." This is a job with tremendous skills. They need to recognize the accumulation of life skills they have and how these relate to [other] jobs. For example egg whites to paint mixing, and so on….Then, when that woman turns around and teaches another woman about those skills and fears, I get all choked up. They're doing it all - I'm instigating and organizing - they're making it happen. [#16/12,18,22]

Blurring the Confines of Learning: "It has to be integrated" (15)

Despite their critique of formal education (especially of university academics), and the heavy emphasis placed on the importance of personal experience and social exchanges, the CSTIER study practitioners did not dismiss a valuable contributing role for formal learning. Rather, they argued that formal education provides only some components of the overall knowledge needed to conduct successful CED practice. As they explained, the nature of the work demands the integration of various kinds of knowledge, otherwise "there's not much point" [#03/18]:

> The most useful by far is integrated knowledge; not just theory and applied, but the political and financial realities, the interactions, communications, and the technical. For example, I had technical knowledge on how to write a heck of a business plan to get financing from a bank. But I need to make that relevant to my political, social, financial context. [#05/18]

> Learning [new things] wasn't the purpose at the beginning, but after volunteering six or seven months, I realized there was a whole other thing I could be learning,…compared to the institutionalized learning of the university, the [CED program] was a much more natural way of learning. Now, being on the centre Board is yet another kind of learning, plus [I have] recently returned to formal learning structures to pursue a graduate degree in CED.[01D]

> We have to deal first with individuals and ways of thinking - to respond first to the human being. Then, the political and technical issues and knowledge are involved - neither can be ignored….There are lots of resources for the technical, and information for the political, but if you can't listen to the personal stuff, then you can't integrate the other knowledge...In the end, integrated learning is what counts, but the above [description] is the process. [#11/18]

> It's impossible to separate [types of learning]….Each member has different skills in the

technical area (so some of the team might say they draw more on one area), but as a team [our knowledge] is very integrated. That's what makes the program women-based, women-centred. It's an unquestionable principle - it must be based on integrated knowledge....For me the integrated learning is right in the inception of the process. Analysing [the clients'] own lives is the beginning point, starting from their experiences to evaluate what they can do and how they can do it. [#8/18].

The CED practitioners describe a process in which the various kinds of learning are combined and the boundaries between them become blurred. Even if various aspects of information were gained from different sources, at different times, these are not useful knowledge until they are integrated. Furthermore, the necessary kind of knowledge requires that the practitioners shuttle back and forth between formal, non-formal, and informal learning activities.(16) As has been previously illustrated, for the CED worker, doing and learning are inseparable activities, and integration is part of the "doing" involved in creating useful knowledge.

Other researchers looking at the role of informal learning in community settings have also noted at least some aspects of this boundary challenge, Church et al (2000) observe that marginalized groups tend to see types of learning as part of an "overlapping and simultaneous process" (p.35). Lovett (1997) identifies informal learning as an essential component of converting knowledge imparted via formal education into material useful to community education. Stratton (2001) reports that high school students actually construct informal learning networks that operate inside the classroom setting simultaneously with the delivery of formal curriculum content. Clover and Hall (2000) also argue that community knowledge is challenging the utility of continuing to think of learning as something that can be divided into discrete types. Overall, the community knowledge message is that without the component of informal learning, there is merely information - to apply this, or to pass it on effectively, we must personally act upon it and integrate it with what we already 'know.' Such insight is entirely compatible with cognitive science. So why do formal learning organizations continue to so marginalize informal community based knowledge? The reasons, which we have discussed earlier, have little to do with learning and much to do with relations of power and control inside formal institutions.

Knowing How to Intercede: Mediating Possibilities

Community development work necessitates confronting power dynamics at every level, and gaining the knowledge required to do their job requires CED practitioners, of necessity, to blur the knowledge and learning boundaries academic institutions construct and uphold. Having created the new, integrated knowledge they need, community workers then apply it to challenging the resistant boundaries created by different and discordant knowledge, which is held by others involved in the development process. Interceding and mediating among individuals and groups holding contrary knowledge perspectives is at the heart of successful community development. The non-constructive oppositional views of both "uppers" and "lowers" must be confronted in the process, and CED workers must create a bridge between them. That bridge may be shaky and imperfect, but without it, there is no way toward change. Practitioners know this, and within recent practitioner-generated literature (from a variety of originating disciplines), consensus is emerging about the kinds of knowledge base and practice approaches required for successful CED (Gutierrez & Lord, 1998).

The emerging literature does not dismiss or minimize the difficulties practitioners face, but acknowledges and confronts them in an attempt to find ways to move forward. There is agreement that such work requires a special kind of knowledge (Chambers, 1997; Rubin, 1997). Rubin describes it as allowing the worker to survive in the niche between the business deal and the social action (1997 p.82). He argues that no matter how hard it is to achieve, CED requires the recognition of a "double bottom line" - one that addresses the fiscal and social realities. Arriving at such a recognition requires the mediation skills to convince those controlling the fiscal end that in a distressed community, "profound personal problems" *are* the economic conditions (p.62). Those concerned with the social issues must understand that even though the tensions may be irreconcilable (it is "trading with the enemy" in some respects), successful development means negotiating anyway. Using housing development as an example, he suggests that practitioners should first, get the money for the physical development (without it, how will the area improve?). Next, they should argue that the social interventions (child care, adult education, teen programs etc.) are necessary to protect the physical investment.

We have noted earlier the problem of co-optation, and there is substantial agreement in the

literature that avoiding co-optation requires constant vigilance and an ability to be self-critical and embrace error as part of the continuous learning experience (Chambers, 1997; Lennie, 1999; Rubin, 1997). The authors emphasize the importance of using: truly participatory approaches to ensure the involvement of a wide range of community members; support structures (community assets) already in place; and facilitating extended networking by using the language of the community and not that of the dominant structures. Chambers (1997) maintains the necessity of step-by-step work that builds out and up from the grass roots, small and slow perhaps, but with a commitment to continuity, training, encouragement, and using the many points of leverage within organizations at all levels (pp.230-232). Comments from the CSTIER study participants reflect considerable agreement and offer illustrations concerning the process in practice:

> In the beginning [applying new knowledge to practice] was always a problem, but that's why I see CED as an educational process. I go around and get people excited about it and convince them to get involved and support it. It's a question of having enough time. It has never happened that a new idea was implemented a month later. It can be quite a bit longer, but we've never said that we won't do it. We take it one step at a time. [#15/11]

> In the past the organization has been insensitive to the needs, issues and changes [for women]. Now it is gaining more sensitivity to participants....For example we have teamed the abled participants with the disabled. We are identifying transportation difficulties of seniors and trying to address them. It has been a learning process for the organization....We are trying to boost the local economy so that others can create employment. To create a climate for investment in the community in [terms of] business and social programs....Change is occurring now - but very slowly and carefully. I used extreme sensitivity in presenting various changes. I gained trust from the Board by being straightforward and up front, and they respect that. it has taken about 9-10 months to get to this point. There are so many changes to be made naturally everyone resists. [2/17a]

> One way we respond is, if there is an ongoing program established by a funding body, we will not go in meeting their agenda. We will go in redesigning their program rather than ours. For example [we might say] "you talk of individual counselling; we do group counselling. We believe in it because (whatever reasons). Can we get funding?" If they refuse us we won't do it their way. Generally, we get a chance - not always at first crack, but we're like the puppy - they take us home and see how we do.... We're always on a trial basis - but really hard to get rid of! [#4/17a]

> With something new there is always resistance. Not everyone is supportive, so you have to, for me, look for people who are willing to work on it, and not worry too much about the opposition. We need to respect the diversity, yet work with those who do support that [particular] vision....People are often negative about the government, but there are always people who are movers and shakers, and I'm a strong believer in finding them and working with them. I could say all the other things too: that it moves slowly, and that things are entrenched. But, my philosophy is to look for an open door and not to get stuck at a closed one. [#9/15b-17a]

While the practitioners convey a pragmatic view of practice that recognizes the very real difficulties to be faced, their approach is also inspiringly positive. The challenge of conveying the value and importance of CED initiatives is perceived as an exciting educational process. Instead of seeing an overwhelming array of unresisting barriers, the study participants identify an agenda-setting task full of possibilities to create more inclusive, egalitarian communities that are both socially healthy and economically viable. They are determined to achieve this goal by utilizing their simultaneous roles as knowers, teachers and learners to create innovative practice and negotiating approaches.

CONCLUSION: IMPERFECT BUT FORWARD

The participants in the CED study were innovative, determined and positive, but they nevertheless continue to face a difficult political climate and a constant battle to "prove" over and again, that their knowledge is valid, important and effective. Without support, in the face of short-term success stories

proving unsustainable, CED workers will inevitably burn-out and succumb to hopelessness. We face a non-optimal situation full of tensions and contradictions; co-optation is a continual threat; oppositional power dynamics are a constant; and the very best of CED practices are still imperfect. Community development work is messy, often still exclusive of many (especially those viewed as "uneducated' and thus not possessing the "correct" knowledge perspective), but non-action is not an option - action is needed and quickly. So where do we go from here?

Referring critically to the post-modern academic position as unhelpful and unacceptable to those engaged in front-line development practice, Chambers (1997) asserts that even if we have to work "on the edge of chaos" we can, and must, bring into view and make intelligible dominant trends that justify and obscure social injustice and inequality (p.222). He argues that a recognition and celebration of multiple realities can lead the way to rich and sustainable communities. Understanding that there is no one final truth, no ultimately correct belief or behaviour does not have to be immobilizing. We may stumble forward imperfectly, but we can move forward. Chambers and others (such as Fontan and Shragge, 2000; Rao et al, 1999; Rubin, 1997) suggest that there are many points of leverage to be identified and used within any organization. Challenging tensions and contradictions can be a powerful way of opening the door to constructive change, but it must be recognized as a constant task.

Chambers, and the CSTIER study participants, have taken the position that in order to move towards long-term structural change we have to find ways to moderate and engage dominant and oppressive structures and processes in the short term. Drawing on the accounts of experienced Canadian CED practitioners, we have suggested that, contained within the knowledge collisions are important possibilities for action. CED activists have no real choice but to utilize such opportunities in order to relate to, and mediate among, distressed communities, the corporate world, and the various levels and agents of the state. The possibility for progressive social change exists because, ultimately, all of these groups must take a position that balances social peace *and* a good economy. Within the tensions that arise from such a necessity, the interests of the social and economic must converge. Literature about CED is beginning to provide detailed examples of how this might be achieved, and Canadian CED practitioners have built a wealth of practice knowledge to be recognized, tapped and shared.

Formal education institutions (particularly universities and colleges), that seek to provide professional education to CED practitioners, must find new and creative ways to encourage, value, validate, systematize, blend, and disseminate the integrated knowledge that is generated by CED practitioners. Educational delivery systems--whether they are face-to-face or on-line, individual or group-based--must also understand and promote this kind of integrated learning. Opportunities for CED education that are so organized are likely to be effective and, thus, create a continuous demand for such services in the CED sector, and possibly, also within other social sectors.

The School of Community and Public Affairs at Concordia University is currently breaking ground with a new program offering a graduate diploma in community and economic development. In personal communications, program co-founder Lance Evoy, and the coordinator of program development, Michael Chervin, talked about how this initiative is confronting the resistant boundaries we have discussed in this paper.[17] It becomes apparent, when reviewing their comments, that principles of effective CED practice have been applied to the process of establishing the graduate diploma, which grew from a summer program on community development, coordinated by Evoy.

Chervin and Evoy emphasized a number of important points that fall into two basic areas: challenging the traditional university structures, and innovative program content. Challenging traditional practices within the university, along with the structural need for co-optation of new knowledge, meant first recognizing and acknowledging these as problematic and then "going against the grain of that need" (Chervin). To do this successfully, it is essential to create a network of people within the university who share the same basic values and vision (albeit from different perspectives), and who can credibly speak from within about the importance and value to the university of a CED program. Establishing the program, however, is just the beginning of a task that is never finished. In a context where tension is inevitable and reversals an ongoing risk, Chervin recommends "continuous engagement with the contradiction of both going against the grain of conventional university 'needs' and of strengthening, in very practical ways, the university's more transformative or emancipatory functions."

Innovative program approaches require the same unremitting engagement with challenge and change. Evoy noted that the issue of academic emphasis on abstract theory is often raised by program participants, but both he and Chervin made a case for the importance and relevance of theory that is fully integrated with practitioner knowledge. The key is finding ways to solicit and respond to "what and how critically reflective practitioners yearn to learn" (Chervin). This involves creatively engaging the tension

between theory and practice as an important aspect of the relation between the two, and finding innovative ways to ground each in the knowledge and experience of the other. In response to this need, the Concordia program explicitly guides its instructors to take up these ongoing challenges, including finding ways to address gaps in current literature. Focussed advertising of part-time positions, and team-teaching, are two methods of allowing practice-based instructors to be part of the program. Students are asked prior to each course what they want to gain from it and what would best support their learning and sharing of knowledge and their input is summarized and circulated among faculty and students. Assignments emphasize the integration of knowledge about theory, policy, practice and personal experience, and students' journals of thoughts, issues and questions are shared by inclusion on a web page. Such approaches clearly echo the preferred two-way, integrated learning approach outlined by participants in the CSTIER study. Evoy commented how struck he was by the degree of sophisticated integration reflected in the discussions of the CED program students, while acknowledging that it could sometimes be a major issue for academics to understand the integration process.

The Concordia program provides an excellent model of a way forward for relevant academic approaches to CED learning. But, Chervin and Evoy emphasize the unfinished nature of the endeavour, and at present there are few Canadian formal education programs designed specifically for CED practitioners. There is, however, more that the academic world can do to generally recognize and support the value of different kinds of knowledge. The NALL network's collaborative, community partner structure, and its focus on informal learning activities, provides an example of the possibilities in that sector. Like CED practice, the experience has been imperfect, uneven, and contested, but definitely breaking ground by challenging the boundaries of traditional formal learning organizations and academic alliances and practices across different levels of uppers and lowers. Those who have been involved will not in future think about knowledge and learning in the same terms and will have ongoing opportunities to spread what has been learned.

The importance of creating strong networks and identifying alliances that can accomplish change (even if these are sometimes tense and difficult to manage), is a point of consensus among development practitioners everywhere. CED workers are aware that there is discord in knowing differently. We believe that they need to use this knowledge and experience to create discord in mainstream thinking by disrupting it with strong arguments for new learning and different approaches. In Canada, we suggest, practitioners have room to make more effective use of the multiple knowledges they recognize and apply to their personal practice approaches. Although governments and business place much emphasis on a knowledge-intensive economy, to date CED has tended to focus on low technology initiatives and training - which in itself is a reflection of the internalized fallacy that those lacking formal education credentials also lack intellectual (learning) ability. There is an opportunity, therefore, to bridge that divide. CED *is* knowledge intensive, for both practitioners and program participants. CED workers need to take that recognition and their negotiating skills and apply them to new knowledge production by producing methods that lead program participants to better jobs and more learning opportunities. They have to 'sell' CED as a knowledge-intensive, important and vital part of the new global information-based economy. If lifelong learning is held to be a necessity of the new economy, it must follow that it is also an essential part of CED work - for practitioner and participant alike. A convincing case can be made that both government and business should invest in CED training and development, and make a commitment to stable and longer-term funding.

We also note that it seems to have been overlooked that the high technology industry itself has gone far in breaking down the barriers between formal and informal learning. Practical ability is more important to the industry in the development and application of frontline technology than paper credentials. Technology companies operate campuses that allow their workers to share knowledge and integrate their social networks with their professional lives - they push the sharing of knowledge and teaching through intentional networking. There is always money and time for technology workers to learn - why not, therefore, for CED workers and the participants in CED projects? Development workers concerned with contesting social inequalities worry about dominant groups co-opting, mainstreaming, and rendering ineffective, their methods of practice. However, we contend that CED workers can co-opt some mainstream ideas and practices to successfully advance community development projects.(18)

We do not want to in anyway minimize the strategic and tactical risks inherent in partnerships with dominant power groups, but CED cannot proceed without forming them. CED work is imperfect, but it is much better than not taking any local action. It will never be perfected because it is necessitated in the first place by an imperfect world. However, CED could be much improved if practitioners at all points on the CED spectrum were to benefit from training that was on-going, and organized around the

integrated knowledge model that practitioners themselves identify and prefer. Engaged scholars, CED practitioners and all community members concerned with social justice must continue to struggle forward, imperfectly, recognizing both the barriers and possibilities contained within multiple and discordant knowledge perspectives.

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ENDNOTES

1.The knowledge perspectives of many people have contributed to the development of this article and thanks are due to all of them. In particular we wish to acknowledge the vital contributions of the CED practitioners who participated in the study upon which our discussion is based. Special appreciation is also due to Barbara Levine, who initiated the women and CED study, and to Michael Chervin and Lance Evoy for their reflections on the Graduate Diploma in CED at Concordia University. The NALL

network, most particularly Research Group 5, has provided material support and stimulating intellectual input and encouragement.

2.NALL was based in the department of Sociology and Equity Studies at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE). The network's research activities were funded by a grant from the Social Sciences and Humanities Council of Canada between 1997 and 2001.

3.Defining the concept of formal, non-formal, and informal learning has been challenging and contentious for NALL. The working definitions of formal and informal learning are available at www.oise.utoronto.ca/depts/sese/csew/nall/index.htm However, this discussion contests the existence of any clear boundaries between different types of learning. Our broad working definitions are addressed later under "Background and Methodology."

4. *Women and Community Economic Development: Changing Knowledge, Changing Practice* (Stratton & Levine, 1999) is a summary of the results of the study available from CSTIER (in French and English) and on the Internet at http://www.carleton.ca/cstier . It is also available from NALL as Working Paper #12-2000. A copy of the interview schedule containing a full description of the results is also available from CSTIER upon request.

5. Barbara Levine, who was with CSTIER as an Associate Director in 1998 -1989, was the original Principal Investigator for the Women and CED project. She identified the research concern and wrote the initial proposal to NALL.

6. Only one question late in the interview actually suggested categories of knowledge/learning and these were "technical," political," "personal," and "integrated." These categories were suggested by Barbara Levine, based on her own experience of CED practice and the language and areas of knowledge familiar to practitioners.

7. We recognize that there are further conceptual issues imbedded here. NALL has generally used the terms "knowledge" and "learning" interchangeably (as well as learning/training/education). We have added to this the term "information." Data from our project seems to suggest these terms are not synonymous, but take on different roles in a learning/ knowledge creation process. Sorting out such tangled conceptualizations has been given very little previous attention and is beyond the scope of the present discussion. NALL's attempts to date have served more to muddy than clarify the matter.

8. It should be noted that all but one of the research participants had some post-secondary education and over 70% had at least one university degree. Their criticisms of academia are grounded in experience of these formal institutions and do not derive from an inability to interact successfully with formal learning structures.

9.To be completely fair, some of the cited literature was only published after the date of the initial literature search, and electronic search engines have improved greatly in the interceding 20 months, Nevertheless, it was the focus on knowledge clashes in community development (rather than gender, CED and learning) that proved to be most productive.

10.This matter of competing disciplines, theories and jargon needs to be emphasized. A detailed discussion is outside the scope of this paper, but it is worth noting that the cited literature spans six to eight different disciplines (depending on how one divides them up), located internationally. It offers an even larger number of theoretical approaches to analysing the problems and employs different terminology to describe the same basic issue. There are, for example, myriad (and often poorly defined) terms relating to participatory research approaches and/or community consultation methods, and Lovett (1997) notes various interpretations of 'community education.' NALL members have noted this diversity among their work (Church, 2000). As academics, we have found the exposure to it challenging and often rewarding, but it nevertheless underlines a barrier that exists *within* academia as well as *between* it and the broader community.

11. The authors found it particularly challenging to present the discussion of these differing perspectives and ongoing tensions in a balanced and nuanced way that neither exaggerated, nor minimized, their

divisiveness.

12. There are many examples among academic publications. While some authors emphasize CED as a strategy for social change and underline the dangers of cooptation by state and corporate partners, others argue a need for social advocates to increase entrepreneurial approaches and broaden capacity building skills. Still others argue it is possible to negotiate the pitfalls without sacrificing social development goals. For some examples see: Fontan & Shragge, 2000, Jackson, 2000, Murray & Ferguson, 1988; Rubin, 1997; Shragge, 1997; Torjman, 1999.

13. There are also probably misunderstandings regarding what is actually meant by some terms. For example, participants in Oberdof (Ed.) (1999) contended that microenterprise and microfinance are not the same thing. There is little agreement, however, concerning the exact role of microfinance in CED. Discussants argued that it depends on context and available alternatives.

14.During the pilot study phase of the CSTIER research, early in the focus group discussion, one of the participants declared, "it's not just about gender." This statement is definitive of the complexity of relations that emerged in the subsequent research.

15. When asked what kinds of knowledge they found most useful to CED practice, participants in the present study repeatedly argued that various kinds of knowledge had to be integrated.

16.This boundary crossing is increased because CED practitioners are often responsible for designing and implementing non-formal community learning and training experiences. To do this, they combine various elements of their own learning, and learn informally through the experience of providing the non-formal activity. For them a non-formal opportunity might be a conference workshop where practitioners exchanged such experiences. But they might learn equally well from an informal opportunity to do the same. It is not, therefore, surprising that these academic conceptual distinctions tend to be viewed as meaningless by many people involved in community-based learning.

17. This section is based on personal communications with Michael Chervin on February 26, 2001 and Lance Evoy on March 1, 2001. We are indebted to them for their insightful in-depth comments, which are worthy of considerably more attention than is possible within this paper.

18.We are not oblivious to the competition and profit motives that 'inspire' the technology sector to provide such worker supports. What we are arguing is that just as the governments etc. often co-opt the language of participatory community partnership to forward dominant goals, so might CED practice take the language and methods of dominant groups to forward its own.